



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

October 21, 2012

Pentecost 21

Sermon Text: [1 Peter 2:4-6, 9](#)

Pastor Dennis Kleist

First Lesson: [2 Kings 5:14-27](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 90](#)

Second Lesson: [Hebrews 13:1-6](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Mark 10:17-27](#)

God Is Still Building This Church

1. He's building it for you
2. He's building it through you

Dear friends in our Lord, it is indeed my privilege to share with you this portion of God's Word on this, a continuation of your 150th Anniversary celebration. One Hundred Fifty years...that's really quite amazing, isn't it? Just think, 150 years ago this congregation was founded, only 14 years after Wisconsin became a state in 1862. Then a short time later, 1866, the first school was started. Imagine God's grace over all of that time. The first church was built very close to this church, the first school.

When I drove up, I looked around a bit and I saw your school with its recent remodeling. I came into the church facility and saw how beautifully this has been maintained and remodeled. And I think you could really say, like that phrase that has been bantered about during the election campaign, "Wow! We built this! Isn't it great?" Or could you really say that?

Celebrating 150 years...are you celebrating 150 years of men and women building buildings of brick and stone here at Zion? Or are you celebrating God's grace and that for the last 150 years he has been gathering men and women, eternal souls, and building them into his spiritual church here at Zion? That's what we are really celebrating, isn't it, when we celebrate an anniversary.

So this morning, I ask you to consider this theme based on this part of Scripture, and that is that God is still building this church. He's building it first of all **for you**, and he's building it for the future **through you**.

As you celebrate an anniversary, I wonder how many of you think of this church as being built **for you**, not just the structure, but the spiritual church of God. But that's really the case. In fact, God has been building his church for you long before 1862, long before our forefathers in Germany sent over pastors through mission societies to this area, long before Columbus sailed the ocean blue, long before the crusades, even long before Paul took his Gospel to Rome. In fact, we could say God has been building this church since Pentecost, the birthday of the Christian church. He's been building it for you.

If you think of it, ever since Pentecost, God has taken that Gospel and it's traveled down from generation to generation to generation to generation across the continent,

across the ocean, all the way to this portion of our country so that right here, right now, this church is being built for you who are sitting in these pews this morning. God has seen to it that this Gospel has come to you. He has directed history so that you're hearing it and so that these words of our text might be taking place at this moment. God is building you also like living stones into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. And if you really want to get down to it, he's been building this church for you since before the world was even created.

Our God is an amazing God. In his omniscience, in his mind, which takes past, present and future and puts them all into now as the moment, in Ephesians God tells us he chose you in Christ before the creation of the world to build you into his church, to have you be one of his holy priesthood. So this is a personal celebration, thinking about God choosing you before the creation of the world, thinking about the birth of the church, the Gospel coming to you right here and right now. God has been at work building this church. He is still building this church. And he is building it personally for you.

How can that possibly be though you might ask? How do I fit into this holy spiritual house of God as a holy priest in God's sight? Is that me? If you read your Bulletin insert, you may have read that my wife and I are the parents of seven children. I have a wonderful family and I'm thankful to God, thankful to God for my wife. But if I'm honest with myself, I have to say that there are times when I love my family and place them in a higher priority than even God in my life. That's a sin against the First Commandment, isn't it, to place anything above God. I'm a sinner. Do I belong in God's holy church?

I see a lot of young people here, so there are a lot of parents and grandparents here. Of our seven children, I have three who are teenagers, and they're all driving. Which means, when they are out at night, they don't always come home when they say they are going to be home. So my wife and I lay there. We are waiting for that car door to slam. And we are thinking what happened? We fret. We worry. Sometimes that fretting and worrying is as if there is no God in the heaven and he has no holy angels to send, so instead of praying and trusting, we're fretting and worrying. Again we realize how sinful we are with our lack of faith and trust.

We all struggle with that human nature, don't we? We are made of the same stuff; lying and lusting and gossiping and being greedy, being selfish and lazy. We all struggle with things like that. So how do we fit into God's spiritual church? How can you serve in God's holy priesthood? The answer is in how he builds his church, how he has built it in the past and is building it right now for you. Because of the cornerstone that he chooses for his church. Our Scripture text says it's holy and precious. That's Christ, isn't it? Because Christ is the cornerstone, you and I can be part of the church. Let me explain that.

When I drove in this morning, I noticed that your cornerstone says 1927. Probably already then cornerstones became rather ceremonial. There was a dedication of the church, the placing of the cornerstone, and maybe like many your church has a hollow

cornerstone so that they have memorabilia in there, mementos. But it wasn't always that way. In ancient times, the cornerstone was the largest stone of the building and the most important stone. All the lines of the building, the length, the width, the vertical lines, took their cue from that cornerstone. So that cornerstone had to be carefully quarried, cautiously cut, and then meticulously placed because if the cornerstone was faulty and out of whack, the whole building would follow that cornerstone.

But who is the cornerstone? It's Christ. God has brought us together with that cornerstone by faith. Some of you were cemented into this church building and connected to the cornerstone in holy Baptism. Some of you through hearing the Word and coming to faith. But we are all connected to Christ and lined up by Christ. So you could say connected to Christ, now we fit, because in Christ you know we have the forgiveness of sins. The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from all sins. So we don't have any chips or cracks or flaws in God's sight anymore. We can be a perfect fit into God's holy sight under Christ's forgiveness.

In addition to that, he gives us his righteousness. Which means that in God's sight, we've lived up to his standards. We are perfectly in line with his standards. You are not one inch, one centimeter out of line from that cornerstone who is perfect and holy because you have his righteousness and you fit. Because of the cornerstone, we can be in God's holy church, the church he's building now, right here, building for you and for me. What a wonderful thought that God laid that cornerstone in Christ so that he could build his church for you and for me, sinners though we be.

But he's not done, is he? He's not done building his church in the world, and he's not done building his church here at Zion even after 150 years. Part of the happy part of the celebration is that this building project continues. God is building his church, including Zion Lutheran Church, for the future. He's building that future through you.

Our text goes on, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."

When Pastor Ott began the service this morning, what did he say is the purpose of Zion Lutheran? To praise God, right? Glorify God, that's our mission. There are a lot of reasons to glorify God. I don't know how you look at God's creation, but when I look out at the stars at night, the millions of stars that are out there, the vastness of the universe, how can you not glorify God who put them all there? Or you have a beautiful fall like we've had, the beauty of the trees, or the food that we all enjoy. Thanksgiving is coming. We can glorify God.

But the real reason to glorify God, the most important reason has to do with what he has done for our salvation. God gave his one and only Son, sent him to the cross to pay for our sins so that we might be with him and have eternal life in heaven. To God be the glory. Isn't that amazing?

God sent his Son to hell and back for you and for me so that we could be with him forever. That's why we glorify God. As we praise God, as our text says, that's what we talk about the most, our Savior Jesus Christ. That's the church's job. He uses people to do that.

I looked through your Anniversary Book. It's wonderful. If you haven't looked through it, look through it. What's in here? Pictures of buildings? A few, but people, people, and not just your 14 pastors who have served this congregation. Not just pictures of the 28 teachers who have served this congregation. Pictures of hundreds of people, people who have served in the Ladies Aid and the Church Council and fellowship groups, with school and Sunday school and musicians all working together for that purpose...to praise God who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light, to talk about Christ. In the past, that's how God has done it and that's how he is going to do it in the future, through people like you.

How is that going to happen? Well, simply as you, in response to the wonderful good news of Jesus, use your time, devote your energies, spend your money, share your talents with things that glorify God and point to our Savior and spread his Gospel. When I see you here, and the children singing, part of carrying out the mission of the church is to have family devotions, having our prayers with our little ones at their bedside, read Meditations around the table, preparing the next generation to glorify God in the future. Making use of our school and Sunday school, preparing the next generation for the future. When you are here serving in church keeping this organization, serving its area and community for the future, putting an offering in the plate, which sends missionaries around the world to spread the Gospel, which is also used to train future pastors and teachers so that when your children go out into different parts of the country, there's a church there faithful to God's Word; all these things you can do so that God uses you to build his church for the future.

But I'm here this morning to make you aware of another way that you may not have thought of, to share with you a tool that you could use to build the church for the future. That is a Christian estate plan. Let me explain it to you this way.

A Christian estate plan is different than just having a Will because it starts off with a confession of faith. Do you think people are interested in hearing what a Will says? A Christian Will starts off with a proclamation that Jesus is my Savior and I commend him to you, my family, as your Savior, as your confidence for life and as your key for heaven.

A Christian estate plan prepares for the future by allowing Christian parents to choose Christian guardians for their children. If the Lord would call those parents home, they would have guardians who would be concerned about Christian education, Christian values, who would bring up those children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The State of Wisconsin doesn't care about that.

A Christian estate plan allows you to make sure this is a strong church through leaving a bequest for the future or maybe establishing an endowment so that even when you're home in heaven, year after year what God has blessed you with can continue to bless this church.

A Christian estate plan can let you prepare for the future by setting up scholarships to train future pastors and teachers. When I read through this book, do you know how many pastors and teachers have come from this congregation according to the book? Thirty. You can help young people still to enter our schools to prepare for the ministry through setting up scholarships.

A Christian estate plan can prepare for the future by setting a personal example. I'll tell you a true story from one of my friends in Appleton who is a pastor there. His dad was a small businessman. When his dad passed away about seven years ago, of course then his mother and he and his three brothers went to the attorney's office. The Will was going to be read. He said as they were walking into that room with the cushy chairs, the attorney said to the four brothers, "Gentlemen, the children's portion of this estate is not divided into four parts but into five. There is one for you, Rob and Eric and Clayton and Joel, but also one for the Lord's work." He said they looked at each other and they all knew exactly what he meant because "Dad always said, 'Jesus is part of our family,' and now Dad was treating Jesus as one of his heirs." What a lasting impression it made on those young men.

God gives us ways, tools to build the church for the future. He's used people in the past. He will use you now.

So it's great to celebrate an anniversary, to look at that past and marvel at God's grace, to see what he's done for you right here, that the Gospel has come to you, and to know that he is going to use us to continue sharing that grace in the future. God is still building this church. He's building it for you and through you.

When you think about it, what more noble, what higher task could there be for our lives, to be part of a building project, not just even for 150 years, but for eternity. May God bless you to that end. Amen.